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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 2, 4 to 16 and 18 to 39 remain in this application. Claims 3 and 17 have been cancelled.

Reconsideration and reversal of the objections expressed in the Office Action mailed June 30, 2004 is requested in light of the following:

In the Office Action, claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by LEAN (Patent No. 4,772,806). Independent method claim 1 has been amended with reference to LEAN and incorporates the subject matter of claim 3 which has consequently been cancelled. Claim 1 has also been amended to define the retrievable substantially autonomous modules as being for receiving and acting on fluid mixture. Support for this exists from page 1, lines 13 to 19, page 5, line 30 to page 6, line 4, and page 10, lines 6 to 9. Corresponding independent system claim 15 has been amended in a similar manner.

LEAN discloses an electrical power distribution system suitable for an airport runway lighting system. The system has a plurality of power driven components 110 or modules connected in series to a power line 111 via corresponding switching device SW, SW', SW". The switching devices enable a power driven component to be bypassed.

In the present invention there is provided a method and system of electrical power distribution or control signal distribution suitable for a substantially underwater system. A plurality of retrievable substantially autonomous modules (12,13,17,18) for receiving and acting on fluid mixture are provided along with module isolating means and a host

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facility (6). Each module has a module based part (21a...h) of the module isolating means within it and the host facility has a host facility based part (15,16) of the module isolating means. The host facility and the modules are connected in series so as to form a circuit, the host facility providing power or control signals to all of the modules. At least one module can be isolated by operating two of the parts of the module isolating means and can be removed without cutting off the supply of power or control signals to any of the remaining modules of the system.

LEAN does not disclose providing a plurality of retrievable substantially autonomous modules for receiving and acting on fluid mixture which each have a module based part of a module isolating means within the module. In contrast, LEAN shows that each switching device is outside its respective power driven component 110. LEAN does not teach or even suggest the switching device receiving and acting on fluid mixture.

The electrical power distribution system of LEAN is suitable for a land-based installation such as an airport runway lighting system because the switching devices and power driven components exist in a non-conductive air based environment and are accessible for operation and maintenance. However, if this system was used underwater, the switching devices would remain submerged if the power driven components were retrieved. If any switching device was to be retrieved then this would require the whole system to be shut down. In contrast, in the present claimed invention if a module part of the module isolating means fails, the substantially autonomous module which contains that part can be retrieved without cutting off the supply of power or control signals to any of the remaining modules of the system. This is particularly useful where the module is underwater when the part fails. Also, if the module is retrieved for, say, maintenance of the means for acting on received fluid mixture, the supply of power or control signals is not cut off to any of the remaining modules of the system.

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In the Office Action, claim 3 (the subject matter of which has been incorporated into claim 1) was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over LEAN in view of ROCCO (Patent No. 5,299,312). ROCCO discloses a token passing computer ring network. The network ring comprises a plurality of subrings connected in series to a network line 12 via corresponding subring modules. If the network goes down, the subrings are switched out off the network by their corresponding subring modules. The subrings are then switched back into the network unless the fault for the network going down is in that particular subring. It is respectfully submitted that ROCCO does not disclose a method of electrical power distribution or control signal distribution suitable for a substantially underwater system, comprising providing a plurality of retrievable substantially autonomous modules for receiving and acting on fluid mixture which each have a module based part of a module isolating means within the module. In contrast, the subring module is never mentioned as being removable from the network and there is no suggestion at all that the subring module could receive and act on fluid mixture.

With regard to the Office Action's citation of WEBB (patent no. 6,005,996), the underwater optical fibre transmission system disclosed therein has branching units 16,18,20 containing switching circuits, with each unit having a corresponding spur terminal 22,24,26. If a terminal was to be recovered, its branching unit would remain underwater. WEBB does not suggest retrievable substantially autonomous modules for receiving and acting on fluid mixture which each have a module based part of a module isolating means within the module.

Hence, currently amended claim 1 is patentable over LEAN, and LEAN in view of ROCCO, and LEAN in view of ROCCO and WEBB. As independent claim 15 has been

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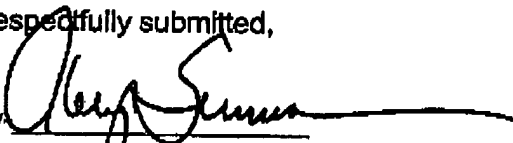
similarly amended, it is also patentable over LEAN, and LEAN in view of ROCCO, and LEAN in view of ROCCO and WEBB.

A number of the claims have also been amended to delete the reference numerals.

In view of the above-noted arguments and amendments to the claims, it is respectfully submitted that both of the independent claims, and the claims dependent therefrom, are now in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

By

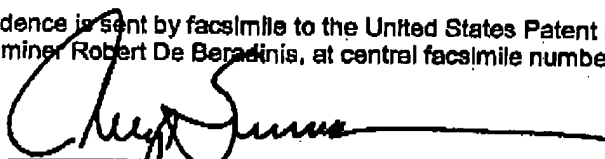


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I hereby certify that this correspondence is sent by facsimile to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Art Unit 2836, Attn: Examiner Robert De Berardinis, at central facsimile number 703-872-9306 on October 15, 2004.


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